

Small ruminant production for food security

“Goats are cattle gifted for the poor”

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Introduction

- Food insecurity and malnutrition are major challenges in Ethiopia.
- About 10% of the country are chronically food insecure, with higher rates during drought seasons.
- Small ruminants are an important asset and source of income for women.
- Women invest the income from sale of small ruminants and products in household consumption needs as well as for their children's education.
- Small ruminants derived foods have a high protein quality found to promote growth and prevent stunting, underweight and chronic malnutrition in toddlers and children.

The study aimed to investigate the role of small ruminant production from a food security angle and explores the different perspectives of women and men on small ruminant importance in alleviating food insecurity.

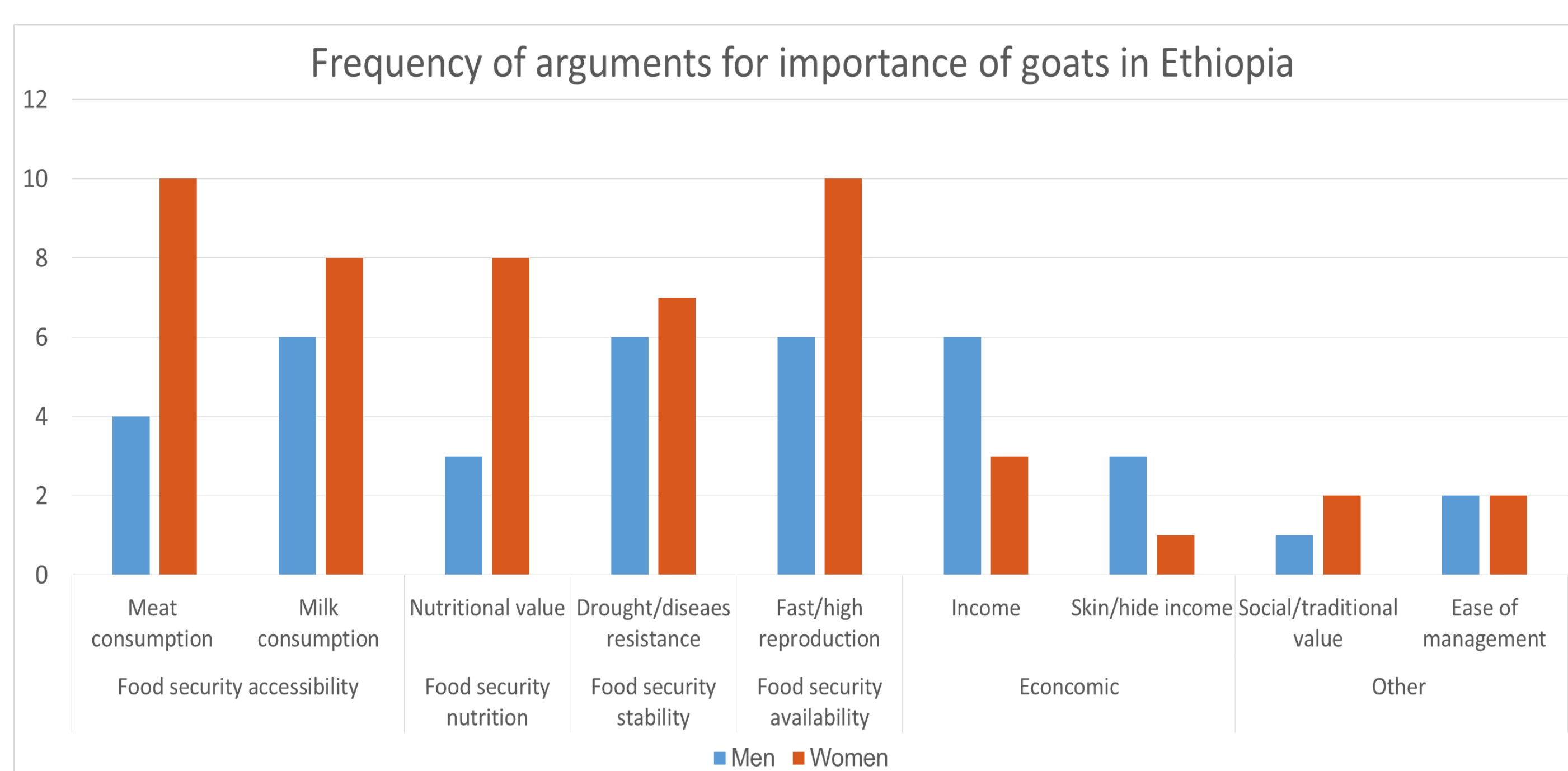
Results

Importance of small ruminants and food security:

- Livestock contributes to food security in several ways: direct access to animal source foods, cash income, which can in turn be used to purchase food.
- When mapping explanations for ranking of different livestock species, interestingly food security related arguments were most prevalent for goats followed by poultry.

Extract of food security related statements:

- Women FGD: *‘Sheep are fast growing cabbage in the homestead’* indicating their availability for home consumption.
‘Sheep are like ‘Injera’ ready to be eaten’ indicating their accessibility for household needs.
- Men FGD: *‘Sheep are like money in a pocket’* stronger focus on economic reasons, linked to income generation.



Food security dimension	Arguments given for importance
Availability	Fast and high reproduction, readily available for sale
Access	Meat and milk for household consumption
Stability	Drought, disease and cold resistance
Utilization	Nutritional/medicinal meat value, esp. for children and sick

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Methods

Gender disaggregated data collected in four regions of Ethiopia:

- 92 focus group discussions; 23 each with men, women, youth male and youth female.
- A household survey involving 429 households; 216 men and 125 women in male household and 88 women in female headed household. In male headed households, a subset of questions was asked to the interviewees and their spouses.

To assess the importance of livestock species participatory tools, such as simple ranking and proportional piling were used. Participants were asked to explain their scores, and obtained statements were mapped to the four dimensions underpinning food security:

- Availability:** The amount of food that is present in a household through own production or bought from the local markets;
- Accessibility:** All households have enough resources to obtain food in sufficient quantity, quality and diversity for a nutritious diet;
- Stability:** Available, accessible and nutritional remains constant during the year and in the long-term and
- Utilization:** Safe and nutritious food which meets households dietary needs.

Gender and animal source foods consumption

- Women tended to express more often that they use animal source food for household consumption than men.

Animal source food	% of women	% of men
Beef	41%	39%
Dairy Milk/milk products	80%	72%
Goat meat	37%	26%
Goat milk	33%	24%
Sheep meat	39%	44%
Sheep milk	2%	2%
Chicken meat	50%	26%
Chicken Eggs	46%	33%

Conclusion

- Small ruminants are important assets, source of income and animal-source food for smallholder farmers, especially for women.
- Small ruminant production can greatly increase food security and thus improve health and malnutrition of families.
- Women contribute significantly to food security through production, economic access to available food, and nutritional security.
- Gender targeted interventions are a good entry point to improve food security and nutrition as women have a key interest in investing in household consumption needs.

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